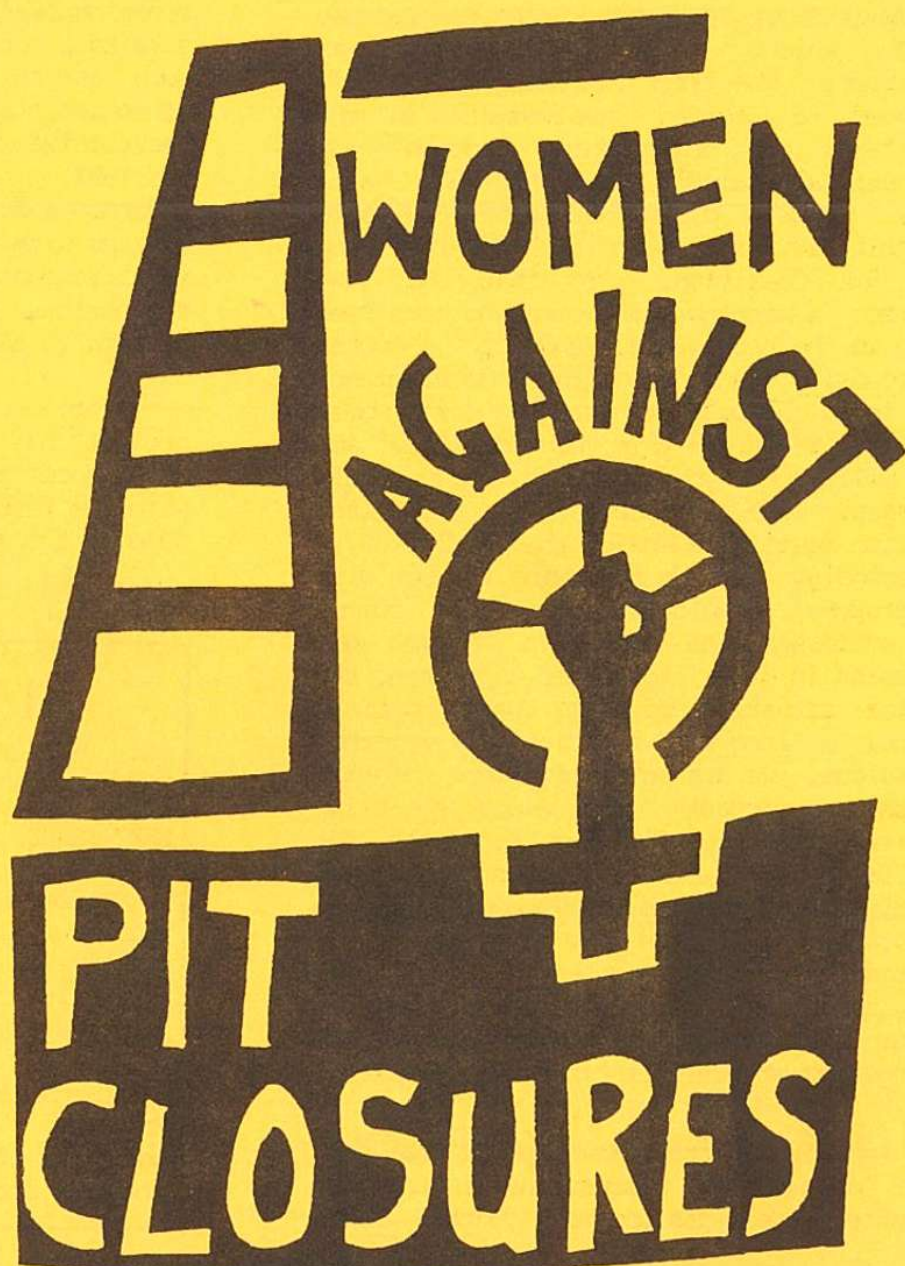


International women's Day committee newsletter

November
1984



IWDC: New Directions

IWDC is alive and well. As reported in our last newsletter we have been going through a reflective period of evaluation and discussion, looking at the role of a socialist feminist group, what our contribution could be to the wider community, and what kind of internal structure we need to work most effectively. This is an ongoing and essential discussion. It has been difficult, and at times, frustrating, but we feel very positive and optimistic about the process so far.

Out of these discussions, there are two issues which we have identified as priorities. The first is that we recognize the need to broaden involvement in the initiating and pre-planning process of International Women's Day, and that as a group, IWDC did not want the sole responsibility for bringing together the March 8th Coalition. To that end, we organized a meeting with women who have been active in the coalition, and put a letter in Broadside announcing this development. There is now a group of about a dozen women who have taken on this responsibility and we will keep you informed about their proposals. The announcement of the first coalition meeting is inside the newsletter.

Secondly, we are following through with the proposal developed during the summer that addresses the need for thought and discussion in order to better understand the political situation and take the appropriate actions. Along with a series of internal discussions, we are initiating some informal discussions amongst the wider socialist feminist community. The two scheduled for this fall deal with the questions of the rise of liberal feminism, and censorship and pornography. At the time of writing this editorial, these meetings have not yet taken place, but we will report on the discussions in our next issue. Details about the meetings appear elsewhere in the newsletter.

Another important development that came out of our summer discussions is that the newsletter itself has become a central focus

for our group practice. As you may know, the members of last year's newsletter committee have left IWDC and will be publishing an independent socialist feminist bulletin. We thank them for their hard work in developing the newsletter and wish them luck with their new project. IWDC intends to maintain the newsletter at the level we have all come to expect. The newsletter will continue to be as informative as possible on a broad range of issues of interest to socialist feminists. At the same time that we are covering this broad range of issues, we will also take note of particular developments, such as the rise in militant strikes where women are playing a key role, following the restrictive wage control legislation imposed in 1982. And as we continue to keep you informed about our internal discussions and debates within IWDC, we would like to hear your response to these debates and your reflections on the wider issues of concern to all of us.

Putting out this newsletter as a group project has been an exciting and educational experience and we hope that you are pleased with the results and will continue to show support through your subscriptions.

In The Next Issue:

WATCH OUT FOR THESE GOODIES AND MORE IN THE NEXT ISSUE

*Andrea Knight's column, "Correct Crime," which will give you the scoop on the politically correct murder mysteries currently swamping the bookshelves of socialists and feminists.

**"Feminists Against Censorship": Mariana Valverde reports on the activities and positions of this new group on the Canadian feminist scene.

Liberal Feminism

As mentioned in the editorial, IWDC has been looking at liberal feminism and at the fact that the media views it as representative of the women's movement as a whole. We have initiated a meeting with other socialist feminists to examine the mainstreaming of our issues, the rise of liberal feminism and appropriate socialist feminist responses.

A number of IWDC members also attended a conference in Montreal sponsored by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, which dealt with breaking the silence between English Canadian women and Quebecois.

We will be doing an in-depth analysis of liberal feminism and the state of the women's movement in the next issue of the newsletter.

Women 1, State 0

HURRAH! HURRAH! On Thursday November 8th 1984, Doctors Morgentaler, Scott and Smoling were found not guilty of conspiracy to procure a miscarriage by an Ontario jury. This is the fourth jury to find Dr. Morgentaler not guilty of breaking the federal abortion law and is a decided victory for the pro-choice movement and women's fight for reproductive rights.

Dr. Morgentaler plans to re-open his Toronto clinic as soon as possible and has offered it to the Ontario government as a pilot project where doctors and staff could be trained in the procedure.

On Saturday November 10th, the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics sponsored a victory rally and demonstration where the demands on the Ontario government included: No appeal of the jury decision, an end to raids on the clinic once it opens and the legalization of free-standing publicly

funded abortion clinics. Other demands were: to drop the charges against the clinic doctors and staff in Winnipeg and the repeal of the federal abortion law. Several hundred supporters came out to the demonstration, despite the miserable weather, to celebrate and show their support for women's reproductive rights and freedom of choice on abortion.

The fight is by no means over! Pro-choice supporters must build on this victory by increasing our visibility and exerting constant pressure on the state in order to fight for and win freedom of choice for women across Canada and Quebec.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

WRITE TO

Roy McMurtry
Legislative Assembly
Queen's Park, Toronto
-demand NO APPEAL

John Crosbie
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
-demand REPEAL THE ABORTION LAW

DONATE to

PRO-CHOICE FUND
P.O. Box 935 STN Q
Toronto, Ontario M4T 2P1

GET INVOLVED

-wear buttons
-talk about the issue
-join OCAC
P.O. Box 753 STN P
Toronto, Ontario M5S 2Z1
(416) 532-8193

The following are excerpts from a speech given by Judy Rebick (OCAC) at a pro-choice rally held Oct. 4, 1984, on the eve of the Morgentaler trial.

Two years ago we kicked off the campaign for the legalization of free-standing abortion clinics. More than 1,000 people were at that meeting and the energy almost lifted the roof off the building. At that time, we said, "We are the majority and we are about to prove it." And prove it, I believe we did. We conducted a campaign of energy and scope rarely seen in Toronto. We went to the Ontario Federation of Labour Convention where we won a large majority vote for legalization of free-standing clinics. More than 10,000 names on a petition, pamphlets, media interviews and speeches led to the moment when the clinic opened in June 1983. There was an incredible response to the opening—almost daily support in pickets, donations, media support. Finally the pro-choice majority had made our presence felt. It seemed like victory was in sight.

Then the full force of the state came down upon us. The raid made us angry and our response, more than 5,000 of us at Queen's Park, was magnificent. But then a more subtle enemy stalked us. Caught in the court system, the fight on the constitutional motion seemed to take forever. A lot of us felt the struggle was out of our hands. At the same time, the anti-choice forces came out of the woodwork. And the Catholic Church hierarchy, concerned about the advances of the pro-choice movement, began to organize aggressively against abortion. The first sign of this was the Anti-choice demonstration on October 1, 1983. Twenty thousand right-to-lifers, most of them arriving on separate school buses, converged on Queen's Park.

But it isn't only the anti-choice forces we are up against. The Liberals and Conservatives have made it very clear that they have no intention of changing the present law. Sometimes it is hard for us to understand why. O.C.A.C. feels strongly that they are not prepared to move on granting the right to abortion because it is so fundamental to women's equality. Our ability to control our own bodies is a pre-condition to our equality. As Gloria Steinem put it, "If we can't control our



bodies from the skin in, how can we control them from the skin out?" This is an historic struggle that we are involved in.

There is something very concrete to be won or lost. With a majority Conservative government, the very real danger, if we let up our fight for a minute, is that the abortion laws will get more restrictive. Even if they don't move to change the law itself, they can put subtle pressure on the provinces to further restrict access. Or the provinces can see that there will be no consequences if they do further restrict access. Thousands of women are suffering today, tens of thousands could be suffering tomorrow.

But it is not just abortion rights at stake. The anti-choice forces are the cutting edge of reaction. Behind them lie forces like the moral minority who want to turn back the clock so that women will be barefoot and pregnant and in the kitchen; who want heterosexuality in marriage to be the only choice; who want to impose their religious views on an entire nation, and who are for the right to life provided you are not a convicted murderer or a Russian. Five years ago the Republican Convention would have been satire, this year it is a reality. The moral minority has taken over the ruling party in the U.S. Let's not get caught saying it can't happen here.

Continued on p. 16

Hi, Tech! Goodbye Jobs!

by Sue Genge, President of C.U.P.E 1582

On Monday October 1st, 1984, the four hundred librarians, library assistants and maintenance workers represented by the Canadian Union of Public Employees, locals 1806, 1582 and 2758 walked off the job in protest of the Metro Toronto Library Board's position in negotiations. We are now entering our fourth week of the strike, having been without a contract since December 31, 1984.

The library is a woman's job ghetto, and the issues in this strike are a matter of survival. Approximately 80% of the workers in the library are women. The library board's negotiating team presented us with massive takeaways which would remove the basic rights we already have in our contracts. The issues at stake include seniority rights which guarantee protection against arbitrary and unfair layoff and rehiring practices. Management refuses to give reasonable assurance that technological change will not lead to

massive layoffs. They also want to remove job protection in the event of contracting out, and have threatened the removal of forty members from our unions. The Board has also refused to agree to the removal of employees from VDT equipment due to medical reasons; this includes pregnant women, employees fighting cancer or with serious eye problems. We would like such employees to be moved to another job at the same rate of pay. In view of the many changes occurring in libraries, not only must we keep them from re-writing our current contracts, but we need to make improvements in them.

We need your support, as many of these issues affect us all both as workers and as women. Come and join us on our picket lines, or wear our great buttons! We have rallies every Wednesday afternoon from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. featuring various speakers and our new singing group the "Pickettes." Hope to see you all there



A support rally for the striking library workers will be held NOVEMBER 29, 1984 at O.I.S.E. at 8p.m. All proceeds will go to the strikers. Entertainment will include: Arlene Mantle, Faith Nolan and the Red Berets and Union Label.

SUPPORT THE LIBRARY WORKERS- Nov. 29, 1984, 8 p.m. at O.I.S.E. (St. George subway)



Nicaraguan Women Fight

by Carolyn Egan

This past July three members of IWDC-Nancy Fanner, Mariana Valverde and myself - along with Gladys Klestorny and Filomena Carvalho from Women Working with Immigrant Women were able to visit Nicaragua. We were part of a Canadian Action for Nicaragua study tour which spent two weeks travelling in the country meeting with many different people and participating in the fifth anniversary celebrations. On October 12 the tour members organized a public meeting including a slide-tape presentation, music, and two speeches, one of which I presented, dealing with our impressions of the changing role of women. This article reflects some of the points raised.

I have found when I try to relate my experience in Nicaragua that it's hard to express the pace and the breadth of the changes taking place for both women and men. I want to give you a realistic account of the situation of women. I don't want to romanticize it, because there are still real problems, but as a feminist I feel that what is happening now and what it suggests for the future is very encouraging and exciting.

I would like to speak firstly of AMNLAE, the national women's organization. Today it is made up of 83,000 members, and has moved from the concept of a mass organization to that of a women's movement, very much a product of its own history and outlook. Its goals are to ensure social, ideological, and political gains for women, and to make sure that the gains made since 1979 do not diminish, regress or stagnate. It has assumed many activities to more fully incorporate women into the revolutionary process, and also plays a key role in the ideological transformations taking place. Sixty percent of the volunteers in the literacy brigades were women, 80% of the popular health workers, 60% of the People's Militia and almost 90% of the neighbourhood revolutionary patrols. Women have also taken up a leading role in shaping community life. Over 50% of the CCS (Sandinista Defence Committee) which are the urban

neighbourhood organizations are women. This active political and community involvement, leading local political debates, has contributed to the process of changing historical and cultural attitudes toward women's role in society.

Legal reform has also been aimed at equalizing relations between the sexes:

- discrimination on the basis of sex has been eliminated and equal rights within the family enshrined
- period of subsidized maternity leave has been lengthened
- women and men now have joint right and title to property
- equal pay for equal work, equal labour rights
- a mass media communications law which prohibits the use of women as sex objects in advertising
- a nurturance law which explicitly recognizes domestic labour and that it should be a shared responsibility between men and women.

The society as a whole engages in debate over the implementation of laws. As we know, legislation, in itself does not solve a problem, but for those of us who have been fighting for equal pay for work of equal value or mandatory affirmative action, it's a step in the right direction.

But because of the US backed aggression and economic obstacles, material progress has still been unavoidably slower than the Sandinistas would have hoped. For women, often heads of households and with large families, life remains hard. Forty-eight percent of the work force is women and 83% of them are single mothers. Many more are now organized in the unions, but there is no tradition of women labour activism. AMNLAE has formed women's caucuses within the factories and farms, pushing unions to represent and organize women on par with men. In the ATC for example, the rural workers union, AMNLAE, at the behest of women farmworkers, is trying to ensure a 20% female representation at all levels to reflect the percentage of women in the union. More women are now taking leadership roles, but there is still a male

hierarchy. We visited a sewing cooperative, one of the 100 production collectives through which the government is trying to tackle unemployment among women. Women's existing skills are being used to bring them into production.

Although it still reflects the sexual division of labour, women are now covered by labour legislation, get better wages, paid maternity leave, free childcare when available, four weeks paid vacation and the experience of working collectively. It is an experiment in establishing a new mode of production and the goal, though not yet achieved, was to create community laundries, dining rooms, ironing centres, and childcare collectives, bringing production, domestic and social services together.

The situation of women does have contradictions, and I want to speak of two areas in which these contradictions are still obvious.

During the armed struggle leading to liberation 30% of the combatants were women. Defence is an area where women have continued to organize and take up leadership positions. Women represent 60% of the People's Militia and 90% of the neighbourhood revolutionary patrols, which are a fundamental basis for the defence. In the war zones women have formed self-defence units in towns, villages, and farming cooperatives. But AMNLAE is engaged in a struggle around conscription into the army. The military service law, passed in 1983, established mandatory service for men aged 17-75. AMNLAE objected and organized discussions in the neighbourhoods and workplaces, and then introduced amendments. "We couldn't stand by and let old ideas and prejudices hinder our participation in the army." After heated debate the Council of State called on women 17-25 to voluntarily register for military service. Three thousand women from Managua formed the first active contingent of women volunteers and marched through the streets led by Commandante Dora Maria Tellez, 2nd in command at the storming of the National Palace in 1979. AMNLAE is "continuing to insist on participation in equal standing with men". For AMNLAE the issue of abortion is throwing up a whole series of difficulties. Although neither the women who have had abortions, nor practitioners

are prosecuted, the law that makes abortion illegal has not been changed.

Some say this is understandable in a Catholic country, recently decapulated by war, which experienced Somoza's population control policy, and which highly values children, because it could be divisive at a politically difficult time. Nevertheless, unwanted pregnancy is a major problem for individual women. Within the leadership of AMNLAE the right to abortion is supported and seen to be a social and economic necessity. But they also feel to mount a campaign on the issue at this time would be imposing policy from above, that women themselves have not raised it as a priority issue. But the situation is problematic because of the high number of illegal abortions, and it is recognized as an ongoing contradiction with which AMNLAE must deal.

There is no doubt that the revolution has provided a crucial opening for women to gain control over their lives. New legislation, an open political environment, the active backing of the government, and a strong women's organization have made it possible for women to express and act upon their demands. The question as we were told "is no longer whether women can participate in society, but how, to what degree, and with what level of self-organization".

The Sandinista government appears to be committed to equality for women. It feels that women's liberation cannot be achieved in Nicaragua without the precondition of the revolution. Of course, this ideological and economic emancipation is not automatic with national liberation, and requires women to continue to organize for their demands. But I think that there is no doubt that if the revolution is defeated, then the opportunity for women's liberation is also lost.

We saw some of the problems as well as the gains, but on any balance sheet, the gains for women are extraordinary in such a short period of time. And the most important change is the one that is hardest to describe: the sense of possibilities being transformed, of taking control of one's future. It is perhaps for this reason above all, that the experience of women in Nicaragua offers all of us visions of the future.

Forbidden Films

A workshop on Sexuality and Films was held as part of Forbidden Films, the Filmmaker and Human Rights, which was organized by the Toronto Arts Group for Human Rights in aid of Amnesty International. The goal of the festival in which over 100 films from 25 countries were shown, was to initiate a dialogue on censorship from a human rights perspective. Carolyn Egan from IWDC moderated the panel which included Varda Burstyn, feminist teacher and writer who has edited the forthcoming book Women Against Censorship, Gary Kinsman, member of the editorial collective of RITES (a journal of lesbian and gay liberation), Robin Wood who teaches film studies, and Kay Annatage who teaches film and women studies, and directed the film Striptease.

The room at the Rivoli was packed for the discussion with an audience primarily from the arts and film community. All of the panelists spoke from a pro-feminist, sex-positive point of view and although they each focused on different aspects of the issue, there was agreement that state censorship was not the answer. It was felt that the state can't judge systematically in favour of those who are oppressed, doesn't recognize specific inequalities, and that lesbians, gays and women are often the target of state control.



The speakers stated that the debate to date has been polarized between a pro-state censorship position, and a broad civil libertarian one, and that our task should be to develop a new strategy which recognizes the dangers of state censorship and yet decries violence, inequality and the objectification of women. It is up to us to build a social movement developing analysis on social equality, harassment and violence. We should be involved in developing sex positive eroticism as an integral part of our culture, demanding access to and control of the media, boycotting and organizing against violent, women hating, anti-lesbian, and gay depictions, using direct action in certain instances and community education to change attitudes. It was suggested that sexual harassment legislation could potentially be used, or restricted access. But there was disagreement amongst the panelists on the merits of hate legislation. There was quite a lot of discussion from the audience, and the evening was a valuable addition to the ongoing debate on the topic. IWDC is planning a meeting for socialist feminists to discuss pornography and censorship from a socialist feminist viewpoint on Thursday, December 6 at 7:30 pm in the Fireside room at Trinity - St. Paul's Church, 427 Bloor Street West.

The Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics and The Women's Press are co-sponsoring a forum on "The Pro-Choice Movement: New Directions/New Debates". Speakers include Thersa Dobko, OCAC; Kathleen McDonnell, author "Not An Easy Choice: A Feminist Re-Examines Abortion", and Vicki Van Wagner, Toronto Midwives Collective. Tuesday December 11, 1984 at 7:30 p.m., Room 1105, Sanford Fleming Building, Kings College Road, U of T campus. For more information, call Women's Press at 598-0082.

Women Clean Up

by Wendy Iler

Union Representative FAS/OC

We have proven to everyone that we have courage, we proved to Canada and to Olympia and York that we are women and we are immigrants, but we can fight," shouted Emilia Silva to the jubilant ratification meeting, then the workers pushed back their chairs and did the Bird Dance in front of the T.V. cameras.

Thus ended the six week cleaners' strike. The cleaners, most of them women of Portuguese (Azorean) origin, clean the 72-storey First Canadian Place and the (Toronto Stock) Exchange Tower.

The strike began in June with a 96% strike vote. The women knew it would be a tough fight. Federated Building Maintenance, the cleaning contractor who is their direct employer, repeatedly told the union that if they pushed too hard in negotiations their contract would be terminated by Olympia and York (the building owner). Termination would mean the loss of jobs and union rights for the 250 workers. This was no idle threat, since last year unionized cleaners at the Eaton Centre lost their jobs and their union rights when the cleaning contractors changed.

For six weeks the cleaners walked the picket line. There were sixteen entrances, two of them underground tunnels, to be patrolled for scabs. The scabs, some of whom were students hired through the government, came by foot, in cars and taxis, and underground. Police, horses, and private security thugs helped to force the scabs through the line. There were ten arrests as strikers and their families defended their jobs. The cleaners also tried to confront the scabs inside the building, occupying it on two occasions.



Pressure was put on Olympia and York. A letter went to the president of Olympia and York from Emilia Silva, president of the strikers (Food and Service Workers of Canada, local 51). "We are asking you to make sure that Federated bargains in good faith.....and makes us an offer that does not insult our dignity. We ask you to do your part to bring an end to our strike."

At the end of six weeks of strike Federated and Olympia and York sat down with the union committee, and in twelve hours of tough negotiations, there was a new offer from Federated. Federated had offered a 30 cent raise over a two year contract; after six weeks of strike the raise was now 60 cents: 35 cents in the first year of the contract, retroactive to April 13th, and 25 cents in the second year of the contract. Also, during the strike five workers who had been involved in picket line incidents had been fired by the company. These workers returned to work along with the rest of the cleaners.

To celebrate the victory the workers prepared a full-course dinner and dance for 400 hundred people. Attending the event were representatives from the broad base of solidarity which developed during the strike and helped ensure victory. There were feminists, N.D.P.ers, trade unionists, truckers, priests, tenants, and members of a host of immigrant and other community groups.

The cleaners' picket line chant went: O povo unido jamais sera vencido (The people united will never be defeated).

Coal, Not Dole

Since day one of the miners' strike, women from the mining communities have stood solidly with the men - not behind, not at the side of, but right out front with them. Women have picketed, demonstrated, spoken at public meetings, and provided the material and moral support that has held whole communities steady throughout the strike. They have robbed the Tories of the invaluable propaganda of the "women demand their husbands return to work" type. No one is in the slightest doubt that women support the strike and are up front fighting for it.

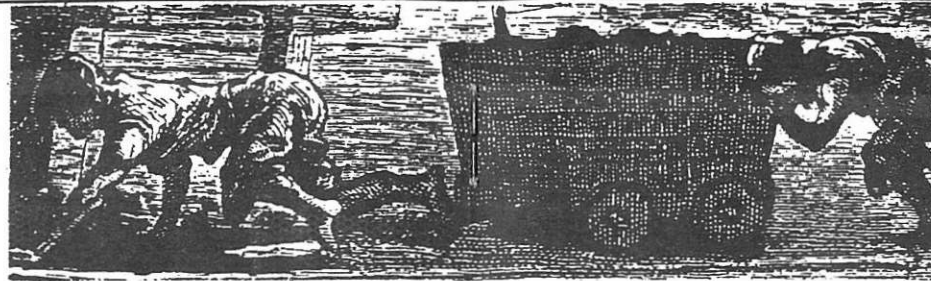
During the dispute they have learned the lessons of how to organize and how to win. Women in the mining communities have made valuable links with other struggles: the fight of the Greenham Common women to refuse the nuclear missiles in Britain and the fight of women in the Labour Party to make their opinions count. These lessons will remain long after the dispute is over.

Lorraine Johnson, whose husband works at the Bold colliery in Lancashire, said that her involvement in the Bold miners' wives' support committee is her first involvement in political activity: "They must organize and get support for the policies they believe in. It's the first time that most wives have ever been involved in anything of this sort. Before, I just voted Labour and left it to others to get on with things. We voted Labour because our parents before us had. The strike has opened up a lot of wiveways. Now I'm going to Labour Party, and so are some of the other women. Maybe some of the other wives will just drift back to the kitchen when the strike is over, but a lot of us have had our eyes opened to what's going on in the world today and we want to be involved in changing things."

Miners' wives' groups have been set up in each of the 14 coalfield regions, and in areas where there are no coalfields women's support groups have been set up to raise money and send food to striking miners in a particular coalfield. The NUM (National Union of Miners) women's movement has really taken off. Women are organizing picketing at pits and many women, including Ann Scargill have been arrested. It is here that these women have learned first-hand about the violence of the police.

A letter sent to an MP from the Calverton miners' wives told of their experience one evening on the picket line. The letter is too long to read, but I would like to take excerpts out of it just to show what these women are willing to endure - One woman in her mid-forties, who offered no resistance, was dragged by two officers, one of whom had his arm around her throat. 'Let her walk,' said one of the officers. 'No, let's drag her,' said the other. They did drag her, face downwards, so her knees and the tops of her feet in open sandals were all battered and grazed. She blacked out, and had to be taken to the hospital. At the police station the women wanted to call home. In some cases the police contacted the women's husbands, but did not inform the women. One woman who had a 16 week old baby said, 'I've always thought the police were supposed to care about people, but when I told them I wanted to speak to my husband because I was worried about my baby, they just laughed and said if I really cared about the baby, I wouldn't have gone on the picket line.'

The police are now trying to stop women from collecting food, clothing and especially money on corners, in markets, and anywhere else. The police have told the women to remove the NUM stickers from their buckets and empty out all the money collected, and when these women have refused, the police have had to back down because members of the public have shown their anger by yelling out things like "Why aren't you out catching murderers and rapists, instead of bullying these people?" It's because of this support for the miners and their families that the police have had to resort to an old 19th



century law prohibiting begging on the street. They haven't as yet been too successful with their convictions because they can't find a nineteenth century judge.

Some support groups originally organized to supply food to the picketing miners, but what sparked off most of the committees was the television coverage at the beginning of the strike of a Nottinghamshire wife escorting her husband to work and saying that she had a toy gun she would use on Arthur Scargill, the head of the NUM. They felt that if this woman was prepared to escort her husband to scab on all his mates, then surely they ought to be prepared to stand at the side of their husbands while they picketed.

It was the militancy and support of the women that was a major factor in the winning of both these strikes and it will be the Women Against Pit Closures that will help bring the miners to victory in Britain. According to the Sheffield Women Against Pit Closures the miners are not just fighting for their jobs. Their struggle is part of a wider one against a government intent on destroying trade unions, privatising profitable parts of the public sector and attacking the living standards of working people.

Since the beginning of the strike, the Women Against Pit Closures committees throughout Britain have organized 2 national demonstrations. On May 12th, 12,000 people marched in Barnsley, Yorkshire. Maureen Douglass from the Doncaster wives group told the crowd that, "What we are doing as women, in this miners' strike, is making history. We are setting a pattern for the future, for the involvement of women in political struggles, which will show what a formidable

force we can be. Without our organized support this strike couldn't win, but we also want the active support of the whole trade union labour movement, and all of us can work to win this support. None of us here will be daunted by hardship, no matter what difficulties we face, for certain we will win." Lorraine Bowler, whose husband is a miner, said at the rally, "I've seen the change coming for years; but the last few weeks have seen it at its best. If we have arguments at home now, it's about who's going on the picket line and who's going to baby-sit."

On August 11th, the Women Against Pit Closures/NUM organized a national women's demonstration in London, where 30,000 voices, mostly women, could be heard for miles around chanting and singing "I'd rather be a picket than a scab", "Maggie Maggie Maggie, Out Out Out," and union songs. This demonstration was not only the wives, sisters, daughters, or mothers of the miners, but women from all parts of the working class movement in a tremendous show of solidarity with the miners. Supporters by the hundreds were lined up along the route cheering, clapping and singing along with the marchers.

At the rally greetings were read from different women's groups throughout Britain, Norway, Sweden, Germany and North America. One of the speakers was a black woman from NALGO - a local government union - who thanked the NUM for their support in the recently won NALGO nurses' strike. She went on to talk about the similarities between the riots in '81, where police violence was used against mainly black youth in the same way the government was using it against the miners.

I came away from the rally feeling a bit awed, as well as fortunate to have been able to witness such a show of militancy and determination by a new proletarian women's movement.

The women are the secret weapon of this strike. If the leadership of the Labour Party and the unions had shown even half the courage and determination the mining women have, this strike would already have been won.

On October 21, 1984, I.W.D.C. sponsored a public meeting entitled, "Coal not Dole." Patti Haberman gave this speech, alongside that of Steve Shukla, a striking miner from the Amthrop Branch.

Election Strategy

by the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics Coordinating Committee

Suddenly the "gender gap" has become a central factor in the real politik of the Canadian electoral scene. Pierre Trudeau, in his farewell address to the nation, proudly noted that during his term in office the Liberals appointed the first woman Speaker, Governor General and Supreme Court Justice. Brian Mulroney, in a speech to 2,000 women in Toronto, stated that women have suffered years of inequality under the Liberals and that only the Tories can lead us out of the wilderness and into the land of total equality. We were all witness to the scene recently where the seven Liberal leadership candidates each claimed to be the first to recognize women's rights. Is such attention a dream or a nightmare?

We are right to be wary of the sincerity of these politicians. Their new-found feminism (not to be confused with those "noisy militant feminists" who actually fight for women's rights between elections) may be little more than blatant opportunism. Yet, while we must ever be cynical of these politicians, we can use the fact that "liberation" has become a political watch-word and become opportunistic ourselves.

There are a number of responses the women's movement could make to this development. We could sit back and relax, secure in the knowledge that the principles of feminism are finally understood and our equality is as good as won - an unlikely prospect. We could ask the politicians where they have been all of our lives and tell them where they can go now. While this response may be dear to our hearts, we don't think it will be of much value to our cause.

Rather we should go on the offensive and demand that the politicians resolve women's issues as we define them. The upcoming election provides the women's movement with

both a challenge and a responsibility. The challenge is to take advantage of the climate of the present elections, and to use this time to educate Canadians of the issues at hand. This election, the politicians will be espousing views on equal pay, affirmative action, daycare and pornography. We must ensure that both the politicians and the voters hear our feminist analysis of these issues. Our responsibility is to realize our demands without being co-opted. We must not be satisfied with vague generalities nor commitments to equality "in principle." Any organized feminist intervention into the elections must force open the emptiness of the usual political platitudes and struggle for concrete demands.



Many of us in the women's movement have felt that electoral politics are irrelevant to our struggles. The time has come to reassess this view. Historically, our cynicism of institutionalized politics has allowed us the independence of an autonomous women's movement: fighting in the streets, in the press, in our homes and workplaces; through some formidable grass-roots organizations. Our allegiance is still with this network. However, in all of these battles we continually run up smack against the power of the state. It is the state, with all of its agencies, that determines our inequality: that limits daycare spaces, that denies lesbians custody rights, that prosecutes doctors for performing abortions, etc. We have always organized around issues to influence the government. We must also organize around the elections to make public our issues.

We have no illusions that elections will solve all of our problems and empower women. However, they do provide at least three options: a forum to educate large numbers of people normally inaccessible to us; a platform by which we might mobilize the women's movement; and a lever by which we might attain feminist goals through political pressure.

This is the time that politics become legitimate in this country. A small action during an election period can receive tremendous attention. During the recent "Lunches with Leaders" in Toronto, Brian Mulroney was met with such an action. He was asked if, given the inequity of the existing abortion laws and the opinion polls showing that the majority of Canadians favor a woman's right to choose, he would remove abortion from the Criminal Code. Facing the cameras, and 2,000 women, he was forced to frankly admit his faith in the present laws, and the anti-choice view of the Progressive Conservative party was now on record.

The Liberals, too, support the present laws, in the name of party unity, consensus and a "pluralistic society." When the Liberal leadership candidates were here in Toronto though, they were met with a hearty "Liberals for Choice" presence.

Although the NDP is on record as favouring repeal of the abortion laws, most NDP politicians attempt to avoid the issue for fear of provoking a party polarization. It was the Ontario NDP Women's Committee, in a hotly contested battle at the recent provincial convention, that spearheaded the provincial party to follow the federal lead in adopting a strong pro-choice stance.

We think the time has come for the women's movement to get actively involved in electoral politics, not as a substitute for our other activities, but as a valuable addition to our arsenal. They say they want women's participation in politics - well, let's give it to them - on our terms, for our empowerment.

Members of the OCAC Coordinating Committee who worked on this article are: Judy Rebeck, Patricia Antonyshyn, Theresa Dobko, Carolyn Egan and Linda Gardner.



Women for Peace by Meinrad Craighead, for the Women's Peace Alliance

THE PEACE PETITION CARAVAN

The Peace Petition Caravan in which a number of I.W.D.C. women were active through the T.D.N. was quite successful. Over 400,000 signatures were collected through the efforts of peace groups, women's organizations, trade unions and many individuals. The political impact of the campaign was certainly felt through the recent federal elections, and allowed many of us to be active in our communities and work places. It allowed us to speak and organize around issues and associated political concerns including spending priorities, social service cutbacks, and U.S. intervention in Central America.

On October 22, 1984, representatives met with the leaders of the three political parties to discuss the aims of the campaign. Encouraged by the experience of working together, the many groups involved are looking at the possibility of a nationwide coalition. The T.D.N. is to host a national conference to discuss this. Any women who would be interested in joining the women's caucus please call Mariana Valverde at 532-8989, or Wendy Wright at 535-8005.



Teachers' Workload Bypassed

by Maureen Hynes
What's happening at the community colleges?

On October 17, for the first time since we certified as part of the Ontario Provincial Service Employees' Union (OPSEU), the 7600 teachers, librarians and counsellors at Ontario's 22 community colleges have gone out on strike.

This provincial-wide action which shut down the colleges was not taken lightly. For four years, we've been trying to get the province, our employer, to negotiate into our contract some comprehensive language defining our workload.

In the previous round of negotiations, we were prevented from bargaining effectively by provincial wage restraints because our demands—which were not wage demands—were considered "monetary" by our employer.

Why is workload our main issue?

Our collective agreement is largely silent on the issue of workload, unlike the contracts of other teachers in the province. What we are asking for is not a Utopian contract; we want a workload formula similar to the one in place at Ryerson. This kind of formula recognizes factors like class size, student evaluation, supervision of students in job training settings, counselling on a one-to-one basis, testing, the preparation differential for old and new courses, meetings and committee work as part of our jobs beyond the specified number of teaching hours in our contract.

The issue of workload affects not only our working conditions and our job security, but most importantly, the quality of education in this province.

When our classes are too large, when students are placed in labs with insufficient supervision, when courses are run haphazardly and a teacher is given 48 hours' notice to prepare an entirely new course, when nursing students are not given the supervision they used to receive in clinics and hospitals, when facilities are not upgraded to accommodate record numbers of students, when resigning teachers are not

replaced in ongoing programmes — what happens? Yes, the colleges and the provinces save money on education. But what else happens?



What we see is a dramatic reduction in the quality of education for our young people, for the unemployed who are seeking retraining, and for immigrants, women and other disadvantaged groups. We are physically no longer capable of offering the same quality education we gave even a few years ago.

We also see access to post-secondary education as seriously in jeopardy in Ontario today. Ontario is a province whose per capita spending on education has dropped from first place in Canada to ninth over the past ten years. Under the present government, education has turned into a "warm body" matter — just place a teacher in front of as big a class as possible, with no concern for the content and process of education.

At the same time, we see record numbers of applications to community college programmes, and record numbers of rejections to our job training courses.

This is not the kind of educational system we want to be a part of delivering.

Editor's Note:

The teachers have been legislated back to work. This action was taken by the government on Nov. 8, 1984.

South Asian Women Organize

by Tania Das Gupta

The South Asian Women's Group (SAWG) is a community group concerned with the needs of women whose origins lie in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and other neighbouring countries. Our main objectives are to break our social isolation, integrate into Canadian society, deal with problems of new immigrants, including those involving children and educate ourselves regarding common concerns, e.g. employment, immigration, etc.

East Indian women generally came to Canada as "sponsored" relatives. This has continued today. Being sponsored, our dependent status continues while we try to integrate into Canadian society. Given our socio-economic background and often the inability to speak English, we feel a sense of isolation and alienation. Though more and more of us are entering the paid workforce today, we are concentrated in low paying and traditionally "female" jobs. This is often compounded by a lack of recognition of our previous skills and education and lack of access to English language courses. Due to our social dependence, we are vulnerable to oppression at home and in society at large. Being visible minority women, we are also subjected to racism in every sphere of life. We are stereotyped as dirty, passive and slow. Thus, we face a triple oppression as women, workers and as visible minorities.

To achieve our objectives, SAWG provides services in referrals, support, befriending, general counselling and interpretation. These services are provided in person or over the phone at 537-0782, Monday and Wednesday, 4-7 p.m. SAWG operates at these hours at 1072A Bloor St. West. In addition, SAWG members hold monthly meetings every third Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. out of which every other meeting consists of an educational.

Union Women's Conference

by Susan Craig

Nine years ago, a group of women active in the labour movement in Toronto joined together to form Organized Working Women (OWW). Throughout this time, OWW has held large weekend conferences on such topics as women and technological change, child care, equal pay for work of equal value, and so on. These have been extremely successful, and we believe, have started ripples that are still spreading through the labour movement in the form of greater consciousness of women's issues and greater skill in promoting them.

The only criticism we've had is that there has not been enough time for the participants to share their experiences and work on the issues. And this year, in what could be a turning point for the women's movement we feel women who already hold leadership positions in the labour movement need the opportunity to get together, let their hair down and discuss where we go from here.

We are, therefore, planning two events which we hope will be co-sponsored by other organizations. The first is a residential weekend seminar, or think-tank, to take place January 4, 5, and 6th at the Guild Inn in Scarborough. We hope it will be an opportunity for existing women union leaders to recharge their batteries and to make a start at setting up an inter-union network. We also hope that it will be an opportunity to help develop the emerging young women leaders who will help shape the women's movement in the next decade.

The theme of the seminar is the relationship between affirmative action and equal pay for work of equal value. Emphasis will be on participation with delegates being their own resource people.

cont. on page 15.



What's a nice lesbian like you doing in a place like this ...

Theresa Dobko O.C.A.C.

Two women do not a baby make
...zero plus zero still equals zero

These words, shouted out at myself and friends at a subway station one day, at the time only; affected my lesbian sensibility. The words returned to mind with a different flavour however, when I sat down to write this article on lesbians and the pro-choice movement. It was only then that I thought about the implication of such invective for the larger of womyn's sexuality. The young teenaged womyn who displayed such lesbophobia, had continued in a long tradition of equating womyn's sexuality with reproduction. And of course, they are right. The issue of sexual preference is inextricably linked to all facets of reproductive choice.

This article stemmed out of a question one day about what I, as a lesbian, had to gain from my involvement with the pro-choice movement. It is a question that could be asked of many womyn; the support of lesbians within reproductive rights organizations is substantial. I think the first line of response should be to take the question itself to task. Lesbians are as capable, or incapable, of acting totally without self-interest as anyone else. I could be active in the pro-choice movement simply because I feel the cause is just, without seeing any direct benefit to myself as a lesbian. No doubt, many lesbians are involved with the abortion rights struggle purely out of a sense of ethical concern for other womyn.

But we are all other womyn. Each of us, as young womyn, runs the risk of impregnation through incest. Each of us, but the very fact of our womanhood, has the potential to be raped. We all have straight womyn for whom we care or whom we care for: mothers, daughters, sisters; any one of them may require an abortion at some

time in her life. Many of us have lived as heterosexuals before coming to lesbianism and have lived the fear of an unwanted pregnancy. Some of us will identify ourselves as bisexual, or as lesbian but have occasional relationships with men—for us too, then, the politics of reproduction is relevant. We are not any of us, as womyn-loving-womyn, personally immune from the question of abortion. We who love womyn understand most fully that we must struggle for all of the rights necessary for the full equality of all womyn.

Though the foetus fetishists could distract us with their focus on the "personhood" of the foetus, it is not just abortion that concerns the anti-choice



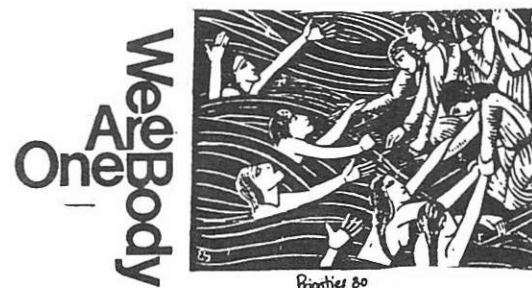
cont. from page 14.

We encourage co-sponsoring unions to send delegates to the conference organizing committee to help shape the weekend to their own needs.

The second event we are planning is a celebration to mark the end of the decade of women. We hope to hold this in May, with the help of some veteran women leaders to inspire us to keep up the fight.

Please contact OWW, 366 Adelaide St. East, Toronto (364-2161)

forces. Like the young womyn at the subway, the right-wing forces which vow to ban abortion, do so within a framework that politicizes all of womyn's sexual and reproductive options. They attempt to convince us, with their rhetoric, that the question of foetal rights may be removed from the question of womyn's rights, but in reality neither they, nor us, believe this to be so.



The exact same opponents of abortion also attack contraceptive freedom (except for abstinence) and sex education in the schools. If the foetus is sacrosanct, then womyn must do nothing to impede its growth. And womyn must do nothing to impede the growth of a foetus because it is only through here reproductive functioning that she is of any value. A woman's sexuality, free of reproduction, does not exist. Enter the lesbian. Not only is her freedom to make choices suspect because she is a woman, her choices are doubly condemned because she is the symbol for non-reproductive sexuality in womyn. For the anti-choice forces, who see no danger in imposing their reproductive morality on womyn, it is a faint step indeed to imposing their sexual morality on womyn as well.

Control of our bodies! Control of our lives! There can be no mistake: if the anti-choice forces succeed in restricting or banning abortions (the cutting-edge of both their ideology and our feminism), they will only feel heartened enough to attack birth control, sex education and freedom of sexual expression.

We who right now are embroiled in legitimizing free-standing clinics, are not simply defending the rights of Dr. Morgentaler, nor the rights of a male doctor to a private clinic (which is certainly not Dr. Morgentaler's dream either). We are fighting to achieve medically-insured, community-based clinics, run by womyn and geared to the health care of all womyn. On a concrete level, we are struggling for lesbian health care, birthing options, contraception and abortion. On the political level, we are challenging the anti-choice forces who seek to destroy the new feminist politics of sexuality (including the new militant lesbianism) by destroying abortion rights first. We as lesbians, as lesbian-feminist womyn, must join the abortion struggle to ensure freedom of abortion and the survival of our hard-won sexual freedom. Two womyn do not a baby make, but we certainly do make a revolution!



Continued from p. 3

Who would have thought it was possible to have a judgement like the one we saw on July 29, in Canada in 1984? In declaring the abortion law constitutional, Justice William Parker said the Charter of Rights protects only those rights spelled out in law or "rooted in our traditions".

Well, abortion is certainly rooted in women's traditions—it's been around for centuries. So whose traditions is he talking about—the sexist traditions of this society that have denied women's rights for decades? Now the request to appeal this conservative decision has also been denied. So we are in a trial, as of October 15.

March 8 Coalition

Readers may feel it's a bit too early to be talking about March 8th 1985. For one thing, most women who participated in this year's March 8th Coalition are just getting over their exhaustion now. But building I.W.D. is a major political project requiring lots of time and energy, and the process has generally begun each year in October.

For the past several years, I.W.D.C. has taken the initiative in planning the day. For us, this has included preparing a proposal for the structure and politics of the day, perhaps drafting a leaflet for International Women's Day, and sending out a letter in November asking groups to come together in a coalition to build the day.

The International Women's Day Committee has decided not to take on the responsibility this year. As a group, we are going through a number of changes and we have chosen to direct our political energies elsewhere this fall. At the same time, we remain committed to the idea that I.W.D. is an important event in the political life of the city and that it would be irresponsible of I.W.D.C. simply to abandon our role without talking about it within the women's community. Nor do we want to leave the planning process until Jan. or Feb., which is too late to pull off anything major.

So, this letter serves both to announce our decision not to take responsibility to initiate I.W.D., and to give women time to think about what they might want to do to celebrate International Women's Day.

By the time this letter is published, the International Women's Day Committee will have spoken with many of the groups and individuals who, year after year, have worked with us in the March 8th Coalition. Basically, we'll be asking them to take on I.W.D.C.'s traditional role: that is, doing some initial planning and calling women

together to build the event. We're hoping lots of new ideas and fresh proposals will be brought forward in the next couple of months.

We invite your participation. Details about the first general coalition meeting follow in the newsletter.

**We who believe in
freedom cannot rest
until it comes.**



From Gang Open House — March 14, 1984

March 8th Coalition

Nov. 21, 1984

7:30 p.m.

St. Christopher House
761 Queen St. West
(Bathurst & Queen)

A coalition of different women have worked together to formulate a proposal for International Women's Day 1985. It will be presented at this meeting and the preparation for 1985 will begin. All women are encouraged to attend and bring their ideas and energy!

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

by Lena Lepage

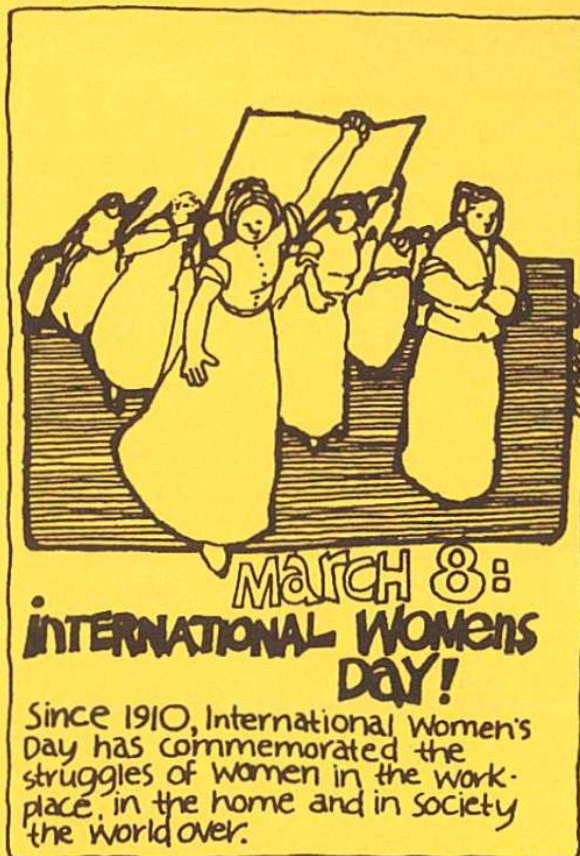
As you probably already know, a steering committee, formed of representatives of women groups and individuals, has been struck on September 24th to initiate the coalition for the International Women's Day.

The steering committee met three times since that first meeting to work out a tentative proposal to call a coalition meeting at the end of November. Already a structure format for this year's celebrations has been agreed upon: As per last year, it will be a week events starting on Saturday March 2nd with a fair and a mixed dance in the evening, some activities during the week and closing with a march and a rally on March 9th and a women only dance in the evening.

At the financial level, a committee has been struck to evaluate last year's financial situation and make some recommendations for this year. This committee proposed that it become the authority to make all the approvals for the different committees expenses. In case of disagreement on a particular issue, the whole coalition will make the decision. Also, to deal with the issue of accountability that has been brought up, the Financial Committee will push hard to get receipts before issuing any reimbursement. This question was a real problem last year. It was also decided to propose that a Fundraising Committee be struck at the beginning of the coalition to assist the Financial Committee in its tasks.

There were also a fair number of discussions on the political content that should be included in the proposal, the main topic in the coming meetings.

There was also a letter prepared to be sent to Women Groups in Toronto inviting them to join the coalition and participate in a meeting to set up the coalition in late November.



Big Benn Strikes

IWDC was involved in organizing a very successful public meeting at which Tony Benn, a leader of the left within the British Labour Party, spoke on "Socialism After Thatcher and Regan."

Recognizing the political crisis which is afflicting the left and the progressive movements, IWDC feels that it is imperative that we take the opportunity to learn and dialogue on strategies and visions of the future.

About 600 men and women attended the meeting, which raised \$3,300 after expenses for the miners on strike in Britain.

FILL THE BOAT SUPPORT AMNLAE

Coalitions in cities across the country are preparing to fill a boat with material aid for the people of Nicaragua which will sail from Vancouver in December.

As yet we don't have details from AMNLAE about what they need most urgently, but we assume the list will look similar to last year's: office supplies and office furniture, typewriters, tape recorders, paper, sewing machines and cloth (for sewing cooperatives), kitchen equipment and toys (for daycare centres) and medical equipment.

Do you have access to supplies and equipment are that not being used? Would your group, local or office be willing to make a donation to AMNLAE through the Boat Project? Please contact Women in Solidarity with Central America (WISCA) for more details: 961-8638 or 532-8584.

About us ...

IWDC is a socialist-feminist group. We operate on the principle that mass actions are our most effective instruments of change. We believe that the oppression of women touches every aspect of our lives and that the liberation of women will require fundamental changes in the structure of society.

We hold bi-weekly meetings where our policy and overall direction are determined. Smaller committees work on specific events or issues or in different constituencies.

We welcome new members. For information call Mariana at 532-8989.



WOMEN WORKING WITH IMMIGRANT
WOMEN GENERAL MEETING

DECEMBER 10th at 2pm

DISCUSSION ON PORNOGRAPHY
led by Mariana Valverde of
IWDC

call Salome Lukas at 531-
2059 for location

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